



GAIL FARBER, Director

# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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900 SOUTH FREMONT AVENUE  
ALHAMBRA, CALIFORNIA 91803-1331  
Telephone: (626) 458-5100  
<http://dpw.lacounty.gov>

ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:  
P.O. BOX 1460  
ALHAMBRA, CALIFORNIA 91802-1460

IN REPLY PLEASE

REFER TO FILE:

**WM-9**

October 15, 2012

Mr. Samuel Unger, P.E., Executive Officer  
California Regional Water Quality  
Control Board – Los Angeles Region  
320 West 4th Street, Suite 200  
Los Angeles, CA 90013-2343

Attention Ms. Shana Rapoport

Dear Mr. Unger:

### **COMMENT LETTER – RECONSIDERATION OF THE NITROGEN COMPOUNDS AND RELATED EFFECTS TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed reconsideration for the Los Angeles River Nitrogen Compounds Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). This letter is being submitted on behalf of the County of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District. While the County of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District generally support the revision of the TMDL based on new scientific information, we are concerned with the manner in which the TMDL is being revised and its implications on stormwater agencies.

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region (Regional Board), is proposing to modify the ammonia numeric targets and waste load allocations (WLAs) for Los Angeles River reaches 3 to 5, Rio Hondo reach 3, and Burbank Western Channel based on the results of a Water-Effects-Ratio (WER) study conducted in 2003 by four Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs). If adopted, the proposed changes would significantly increase the ammonia numeric targets and WLAs for the identified water bodies: by 2 times for Los Angeles River reaches 3 to 5, by 2.1 times for Rio Hondo reach 3, and by 1.4 times for Burbank Western Channel.

As currently proposed, the ammonia numeric targets and WLAs for the remaining reaches of the Los Angeles River would remain unchanged, and as a result, the targets and WLAs for lower reaches of the Los Angeles River (reaches 1 and 2) would become

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half of the corresponding targets and WLAs for the upper reaches 3, 4, and 5. This approach would create inconsistencies across the watershed and make compliance more difficult in the lower reaches.

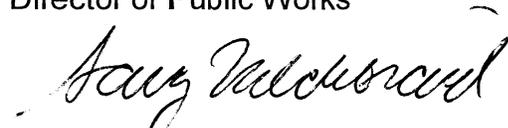
According to the 2003 study, the WER values for the Los Angeles River reaches 3, 4, and 5 are essentially the same, or about 1.97. The similarity of the WER value of these three effluent-dominated reaches indicates that this WER value can be reasonably extrapolated to other effluent-dominated reaches of the Los Angeles River. Specifically, the same WER value of 1.97 should be used for the lower reaches of the Los Angeles River (reaches 1 and 2), which are located downstream of the POTWs discharges. It is unreasonable to require more stringent compliance at downstream reaches while allowing less stringent compliance upstream.

Because it is not reasonable for the Regional Board to allow upstream discharges that would contribute to exceedances of water-quality standards downstream, the ammonia numeric targets and WLAs for reaches 1 and 2 of the Los Angeles River should be adjusted using a WER value of 1.97.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (626) 458-4300 or ghildeb@dpw.lacounty.gov or your staff may contact Ms. Angela George at (626) 458-4325 or ageorge@dpw.lacounty.gov.

Very truly yours,

GAIL FARBER  
Director of Public Works



GARY HILDEBRAND  
Assistant Deputy Director  
Watershed Management Division

GA:jtz

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cc: Chief Executive Office (Dorothea Park)  
County Counsel (Judith Fries)